The art of Frank Norris, storyteller

Hochman, Barbara

Abstract

Over the past twenty years, critics have increasingly challenged the conventional wisdom on Frank Norris as an exponent of literary naturalism. In the present study, Barbara Hochman goes still further in redefining his affinities. She focuses on his artistry as a storyteller, and on his overriding concern with human contact and the functions of aesthetic form. Hochman begins by considering traditional approaches to Norris. She notes that although the rhetoric of the narrative voice and the pattern of events in his fiction made Norris's work seem to fit neatly into the naturalist category, his four major novels—Vandover and the Brute, McTeague, The Octopus, and The Pit—lend themselves to very different readings. Hochman argues that the imaginative focus of Norris's work centers on the vulnerability of the self and its quest for a measure of equilibrium. She shows how Norris's work increasingly depicts constructive individual responses to experience, and the stabilizing power of memory, language, and art. These concerns are seen to account for the enduring vitality of Norris's work, and for the popularity it enjoyed in its own time.-- Book jacket.

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Start by marking "The Art of Frank Norris, Storyteller" as Want to Read: Want to Read saving… Want to Read. Reevaluating Norris's standing as a naturalist relative to other ideas within his work, Hochman sets aside the critical focus on literary naturalism to show Norris's artistry as a storyteller and his concern with human contact and the functions of aesthetic form. Get A Copy. Kindle Store. Frank Norris, 1870-1902. Vandover and the Brute, 1894/5, published 1914. Chapter 14. The novel follows the life of Vandover as an art student and his increasingly degenerate lifestyle and circumstances as his personality disintegrates and finds a desperate outlet through an obsessive creation of art. In Chapter 5, his idea for a masterpiece "The Last Enemy" is presented: "Some time before there had come to him the idea for a great picture."